

Application No. 10/661,807  
Amendment dated February 21, 2006  
In Response to Office Action mailed December 21, 2005  
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### REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed December 21, 2005.  
Claims 27 and 31 are amended. Claim 39 is canceled. The amendment is supported by the present application and do not add new matter. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-10, 27-32 and 36-38 are pending.

#### Allowed Claims

Claims 1-10 and 36-38 were indicated as allowed.

#### Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 27-32 and 39 were rejected as being obvious over Green, Jr. et al. (US 4,862,905) in view of Schubert (US 3,834,285). Applicants submit the above amendments overcome this rejection.

Independent Claim 27 has been amended to recite "providing radially extending troughs on the horizontal surface of the pan, radially transferring the individual objects from a center portion of the horizontal surface of the pan to a plurality of holes at the periphery of said pan." The combination of references cited in the rejection fails to disclose this feature. Neither reference discloses this feature. In the Office Action, in the statement for the reasons for allowance of Claim 1, it was indicated that a "pan with troughs 78 extending radially away from the center as described in the specification . . . is not taught by the prior art in combination with apparatus for providing rods (smoking

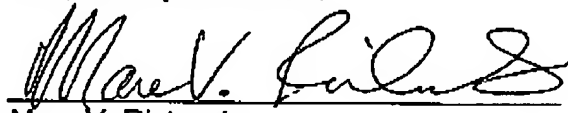
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articles) with objects spaced at predetermined intervals therein. Applicant submits that independentindepndent claim 27 has been amended to recite the features that the Examiner has noted provided the basisbais for allowance of claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection against claim 27 and its dependentdepdnent claims 28-32 should be withdrawn. Moreover, since this feature has been considered by the Examiner in connection with examination of claim 1, the amendment does not raise a new issue requiring a new search and may therefore be entered after the final rejection.

#### Conclusion

Based on the above amendments and remarks, applicants submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. The examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney to expedite allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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